

Social Security Advisory Board
Minutes
Board Meeting
May 9-11, 2011

Location: Columbus, Ohio

Time: May 10: 8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
May 11: 8:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

SSAB Members: Barbara Kennelly, Acting Chair
Jagadeesh Gokhale
Dorcas Hardy
Marsha Katz
Mark Warshawsky

Participants:

SSA – Chicago Regional Office: Marcia Mosley, Deputy Regional Commissioner; Carmen Moreno, Public Affairs Officer, Jim Jamison, Disability Program Administrator;
Columbus Area Office: Doug Schneck, Area Director; Marilyn Robinson, Deputy Area Director; **Columbus Downtown Field Office:** Michael Link, Manager; Derell Williams, SSI Claims Representative; Kristin Vicars, SSI Claims Representative; Eric Christianson, Operations Supervisor; Mya Vandiver, SSI Claims Representative; Janet Lapelusa, Claims Representative; JoAnne Foley, Technical Expert; Chi Woodruff, Claims Representative; Lisa Adkins, Claims Representative; Deborah Harton, Operations Supervisor; Karen Teets, Assistant District Manager; **Columbus North Field Office:** Sue Bergman, Operations Supervisor; Lori Shaw, Operations Supervisor; John Chaley, Technical Expert; Matt Easton, Claims Representative; Tiffany McCallister, Claims Representative; Dianna Wade, Claims Representative; Gatian Justice, Acting Assistant District Manager; Suzanne Nelson, Technical Expert; Suzie Rao, Technical Expert; Ed Wood, Claims Representative; Courtney Rose, Service Representative

Ohio Division of Disability Determination – Erik Williamson, Deputy Director; Teresa Gray, Assistant Deputy Director; Allison Lynch, Area Manager; Orlando Rodriguez, Area Manager; Darin McCoy, Area Manager; Fred Schindler, Area Manager; Darlynn Nero, Homeless Unit Supervisor; Dave LaRosa, Operations Supervisor; Shelly Rhodes, Supervisor

Third Party Assistors – Brandy N. Moorehead, Financial Counselor, The Ohio State University Medical Center; Darlene Orsley, Hospital Counselor, Mount Carmel West Hospital Clinics; Raven Bias, SSI Ohio Project Coordinator; Melissa J. Davey, Vice President for Disability Services, GENEX Services, Inc.; Steven Atwood, Executive Director, Southeast Mental Health Center; Tanya Chiles, Benefit Specialist, Center for Vocational Alternatives; Carrie Printz, Benefit Specialist, Center for Vocational Alternatives

Private Citizens – Robert Carlson, Deborah Stone, David Gray, Marlene Gray

SSAB_Staff:

Katherine Thornton, Staff Director
Debi Sullivan, Deputy Staff Director
Joel Feinleib
Beverly Rollins
George Schuette
David Warner

The Board traveled to Ohio and held a number of meetings with regional and local Social Security Administration (SSA) staff, and employees of the Ohio Division of Disability Determination (DDD). The Board also met with individuals who have experience in dealing with the disability system, and with third party assistors who are helping individuals through the disability application process. The purpose of the Board's visit was twofold: 1) to hear firsthand some of the issues that members of the public face when pursuing disability benefits, how third party assistors can and are helping those individuals, and how SSA and DDD employees feel about using third party assistors and how SSA can make better use of them; and 2) to hear how SSA field office employees communicate with the public on such issues as when to file for Social Security retirement benefits.

The Board heard from members of the public that applying for disability benefits can be daunting – it is confusing, and can take a long time before a decision is rendered. Although they would like to return to work, it would be very difficult to do so in light of their limitations. Also, the Ticket to Work program is not helpful and not easy to work with.

The third party assistors stated that they can work with SSA and provide a good service and a good product. A few hospitals have partnered with SSA and receive training on how disability applications should be completed and submitted and, according to the assistors and SSA staffs, the partnerships are working. The SSA and DDS staffs noted, however, that most of the applications received from third party assistors who have not partnered with SSA lack information and require re-contacting the claimant. They said that with proper training third party assistors can improve their products greatly.

With regard to how the field offices communicate with the public, the Board was told that SSA must rely more and more on the Internet and the information on it has to be easily accessible and easy to understand. Also, unlike in the past when field office staffs were instructed to encourage individuals to file for retirement benefits as young as possible, the staffs are now instructed to provide unbiased information and allow the individuals to make their own decisions.

I certify that the minutes written for the May 10 and 11, 2011 meeting of the Social Security Advisory Board are correct.

Barbara B. Kennelly July 13, 2011
Barbara B. Kennelly Date
Acting Chair
Social Security Advisory Board